

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

24 January 1978

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Dear

I can understand the concerned tone of your letter, but hasten to assure you that I am committed to strengthening the Agency and preparing it to meet the increasing demands it faces now and in the future. STAT

Did you ever chafe at the mounting underemployment, over-supervision and proliferation of staffs at Headquarters? Before I arrived, it had been determined that these were symptoms of too many people in the clandestine service. After consultation with the Agency leadership, I concurred. I know of no informed person who has questioned that decision. Let me assure you that there was nothing "whimsical" about the firing of these "experienced, dedicated operations officers." There is no way to dismiss  people that is pleasant. It was done with great deliberation, soberness and regret. Do you know, however, the average age of all GS-15s, 16s and 17s is between 49.8 and 50.1 years? Do you think when they all retire in 4-6 years we can be well prepared to replace them? What I have suffered through in this traumatic cutting-back is the total pain that was previously avoided by the Agency in hanging on to too many people who are capable and dedicated but excess to our requirements. If we are not careful, we will truly not have a clandestine service in five or ten years unless we plan better and are more willing to face the facts.

I particularly disagree with one point when you speak about the problems of promising young candidates. You are concerned that they look forward to a "secure career progression." I'm not interested in providing sinecures or tenure to people even in the DDO. We simply cannot afford that if we are going to be in an elite, effective and highly qualified organization. There must be competition. I am working hard to ensure that there is a "progression" as you suggest. That, however, means that there must be vacancies up and down the line within the DDO structure. This, in turn, means that we must plan the management of our personnel more systematically and avoid "bunching" of people simply because they don't want to retire.

The biggest threat to the DDO today is really not any of the ones which you mention. It is self-assassination by ex-employees who, by going to the press, are persuading the American public that they are not reliable and responsive to duly constituted authority.

From what I've been told of your career here, I believe you would applaud many of the steps we are taking if you were more fully informed. The leadership of your former component is being stabilized, overseas staffing will be strengthened, new emphasis is being given to professionalism and operational capabilities to meet increasing tasks and demands. Our personnel efforts are designed to ensure that there is a continuing flow of qualified employees and that they have promotional opportunities. In short, I'm "bullish" on the Agency and its future. I think you'd have a brighter outlook too if you were here.

I hope you are enjoying your well-earned retirement. As you can see, I personally read my mail and would welcome any constructive suggestions you care to make.

Yours,



STANSFIELD TURNER

STAT



58-4175

January 2, 1978

Admiral Stansfield Turner  
Director, Central Intelligence

Sir:

If it is true, as I have been told, that you have surrounded yourself with a coterie of "special assistants" which effectively isolates you from the mainstream of the business of clandestine intelligence, this letter will never reach you. But on the off chance that you will see it, I am setting down my views as to what can happen if the present attitudes toward the clandestine arm of the Agency does not change - and soon.

I don't have to tell you that in the wake of the dismissals of senior and mid-level operations officers the morale in the DDO is at an all time low. You are also aware, I'm certain, that the posture of the U.S. Congress makes it much more complicated to carry out the kinds of covert operations that protected our national interests for so many years. You certainly appreciate now that impetuous interviews with the press only make matters worse. In fact, clandestine intelligence operations cannot have "good publicity."

Any old-timer could have advised you that previous meat-axe type firings were later regretted bitterly. That is not to say that there should not be a weeding out process - but on a considered and continuing basis. So, what may we now expect after seeing the almost whimsical firing of experienced, dedicated operations officers? I think the following:

More publicity, embarrassing to the Agency, the U.S. Government, and to you personally, will come from understandably bitter officers who have received "pink slips."

Friendly foreign liaison services will be reluctant to share their take with us.

It will be more difficult to recruit foreign agents who will no longer believe that they would be working for a professional secret service.

American citizens will think twice before volunteering information to an organization that is unable to keep its secrets or to protect its people.

Promising young candidates for a career in DDO will decide that they will be better off in some other activity where they could look forward to a more promising and secure career progression.

And the result of all this will be a weakened intelligence capability, an inability to tell the policy makers what is going on around the world, and a vulnerability to surprise.

It takes a long time, Admiral, to develop a sophisticated, professional secret intelligence service. It takes a much shorter time to destroy it. Its a little late, but think about and try talking to some of the real professionals still in the business.

I don't write books about how I was not appreciated during my career and I don't leak stories to the press. But as a former operations officer (whose career included intelligence work also in the U.S. Navy and the State Department) I am deeply disturbed by what is happening today to CIA's ability to run agent operations, and I submit that you as the boss should be too. STAT

My file bearing my credentials is still there should you wish to have it reviewed. In sum, I retired voluntarily upon reaching fifty-five years of age, at the grade of GS-16, and following service in

Sincerely,

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